UR LIFE FOR THE LIFE OF OTHERS

E. Z. SMYTH

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FOR THEIR SAKES I SANCTIFY MYSELF

S. John xvii. 19

OUR LIFE FOR THE LIFE OF OTHERS

BY

E. Z. SMYTH

WITH A FOREWORD BY THE

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FOREWORD

'WHAT are the legitimate uses of the imagination, that is to say, of the power of perceiving or conceiving with the mind things which cannot be perceived by the senses? Its first and noblest use is to enable us to bring sensibly to our sight the things which are recorded as belonging to our future state, or invisibly surrounding us in this. It is given us that we may imagine the cloud of witnesses, in heaven, and earth, and sea, as if they were now present—the souls of the righteous waiting for us; that we may conceive the great army of the inhabitants of heaven, and discover among them those whom we most desire to be with for ever; that we may be able to vision forth the ministry of angels beside us, and see the chariots of fire on the mountains that gird us round; but, above all, to call up the scenes and facts in which we are commanded to believe, and be present, as if in the body, at every recorded event of the history of the Redeemer.'

When the Author did me the honour to ask me to write a foreword to this book, I felt that I could not place more appropriate words on the first of its pages than these noble words from 'Modern Painters.'

For this book is an attempt, to my mind a singularly happy and successful attempt, to set the imagination at work on the highest themes of all. Indeed, I think it quite possible that the Author may be able to lead a number of despondent souls towards meditation along these pleasant paths.

'It is no good, I simply can't meditate.' How often that is said to me. 'Of course, you think you can't,' I have to say soothingly. 'Never mind, persevere, don't be stiff about it, don't trouble for the present about considerations and affections and resolutions. Get quite quiet and try to be still and silent within; then take a bit of Bible or a point of the Faith and let it rest happily in your mind for a time, and if that is all that happens that will be quite good; but I expect you will be able to stir up your imagination about it sometimes or else let your imagination take it as jumping-off ground towards something else on which it wishes to climb for a little.

At any rate, occasionally you will find yourself able to talk to God about it. For that is what meditation is. It is not asking God for things, or thinking about Him, it is learning to talk to Him a little, not in terms of definite request.'

I feel sure that people will be helped to this by the Author's plan of suggesting a bit of Bible and then letting the mind run happily on themes connected with it.

And I hope that by Easter many will have found that I am right.

H. F. B. Mackay.

INTRODUCTION

THIS little book, for use in Lent, may be read straight through or in daily portions as marked by the forty numbers.

The portions are not in any sense meditations on the references marked at the beginning of each ; but the latter have been added as bearing on the thought of the day's reading, and because many may like a few words of Holy Scripture to form part of their Lent reading.

The writer does not pretend to any originality of thought, but has made use of the thoughts of saintly friends and many writers which have emphasised to her our responsibility for the souls of those around us.

If England is to be a better place after the war, the people of England must develop an unselfish spirit and desire for the welfare of others. Laws are no use unless there is the right spirit in the majority of the people to support the laws.

This book is a little effort to raise the spirit of us Christians, so that an earnest desire for the welfare of others may be, after our Love for God, the mainspring of our lives. So only can we be the salt of the earth.

I

S. John xvii. 19.

THE surpassing beauty of self-sacrifice has been brought home to us during the last few years in a way it has never been before. How often have our hearts thrilled on reading the story of the wonderful behaviour of our men at the front. Perhaps it has been just a bald account like the following: 'On the 1st inst. the King was pleased to confer the Victoria Cross on 2nd Lieutenant —— for great gallantry. He was in a dug-out with the men of his platoon, unpacking bombs for a planned attack. As they were taken out one bomb was observed to be smoking. Instantly Lieutenant —— seized the bomb. Calling to his men to escape, he turned his back to them and held the bomb close to his body till it exploded, killing him instantly. By his action he saved the lives of twelve men, only two of whom were slightly wounded. The Cross was handed to his relations.'

Such acts of heroism have been extraordinarily common among our men, and as we hear of each our hearts seem to bow down in reverence before the beauty of self-sacrifice. All those gallant young lives that have been so bravely laid

down for friends and country, have had the power to make us see there is something richer than wealth, nobler than luxury, better even than happiness, and that something is sacrifice. Self-forgetting giving, giving even to the uttermost, is surely a reflection of the Divine Light, and the man who is capable of it shows himself to be in the image and likeness of God.

Do you not know what it is, after the sun has set and as darkness is settling down on the world, to stand on a hill overlooking a wide plain? There below are dimly seen undulating hills and valleys and masses of trees, all dreary and dark; and then the eye catches sight of a river or distant lake which is reflecting the pure light of the evening sky. Immediately what was dark and dreary becomes a thing of beauty and joy, because the light of heaven has come down to earth. Such a beauty comes into a human life if only for an instant it reflects the mind of God.

The chance of laying down our lives for others does not come to many of us, and yet there is a possibility of our reflecting, in our humdrum lives, that same beauty of self-sacrifice. A life can be lived for others as well as laid down, and a Christian will get his inspiration for such a life in the Life that was laid down for us on Calvary 1900 years ago.

A life lived for others! But you must not picture to yourself simply a life full of kind

deeds and tender ministrations, though, indeed, such must be found in every life. There is a higher part of our life on earth, our life of prayer and sacrament, our spiritual life lived with God, and this, too, may be lived for the sake of others. Christians are often accused of being selfish in their religion, that their one thought is their own salvation. We know true Christians are not like this; they put 'God first, others next, and self last.' And yet, perhaps, there is a danger for some of us in our spiritual lives that, though we may put God first, we sometimes put self next, and others last. Our sins are so serious, our sanctification so necessary, our devotions so important. True, very true, and yet it is possible that if we thought less of self and more of others our devotions might be infinitely richer and more earnest, and that our sanctity might be more Christ-like.

Can it be that we might learn this Lent to make our lives a thing of beauty and joy, something to gladden and cheer the lives of others? Surely it might be so if in it we learn to reflect the mind of God.

II

Gen. i. 1–26; Ps. viii.

The mind of God which we must reflect in our lives, if they are to be things of beauty and

joy, is revealed to us pre-eminently in the life of Christ, and it must be from Him, God's Son, we must learn chiefly this Lent, if we are to learn at all, the secret of a beautiful life.

Yet there are gleams of vision as to what is the mind of God, even in the more shadowy revelation of the Old Testament, and it is at those gleams we will glance first. God's thoughts are shown forth in His words and works. In fact, all words and actions are the outcome of thought, and that is one reason why thoughts are so important—your thoughts, my thoughts.

What, then, is the first revealed thought of God? God said 'Let there be light.' Light where? In heaven? There always was Light in heaven, for God is Light. No! on earth, the place of darkness and chaos. That is the first thought of God's work of creation, and the reason for that work is shown in the last word of creation, 'Let us make man in our own image and likeness.' Yes, man was a thought in the mind of God, and for him and his sake all the ordered work of creation came forth. God called light out of darkness, beauty and order out of chaos, life out of death, for man's sake. What a vision He had, too, of man's future, his destiny. He was to be the image and likeness of God; sharing the joys, the powers, the very being of God: not getting, but giving, was the object of God's creation, and surely

it is a revelation to us of the mind of God. He could not rest until the works of His creation were laid, as it were, at the foot of man, the child of His love. For man was the beauty of sun and moon, the glory of the stars; for man were the budding leaves of spring, the sweetness of the rose, the variety and riches of the animal creation, for 'He giveth all things richly to enjoy.' But, more than all, He breathed into man's nostrils His own spirit, so that man, too, might lay this offering at the feet of others. We can be God-like, for we are made in His image. Is my joy all in giving? Generous, loving giving? If not, why not?

III

Gen. i. 27–31; Rom. ix. 2, 3.

If we go a step further with God's creation, and see how He planned the life of man, we shall see how it was all arranged to develop the self-forgetting, unselfish spirit.

Picture to yourself the love between Adam and Eve as the symbol of all wedded love. What do we see? Adam tending the flowers and fruits of the garden, Eve in the cool of the evening, with the children round her, caring for them and tending them as only a true mother can. Adam does not grudge his labour, for it is a work of love

for the mother and the children. Ah! we know how that beautiful picture was spoilt, in the story, by hatred and sin; but in God's thought what a place of love God meant every family to be! The helplessness of the babies drawing out the self-forgetfulness in the mother and the tender care of the father.

It has often been pointed out that the helplessness of the young animal and its dependence on its parents increase more and more as they reach a higher stage of development. The lowest forms of life never know a parent's care. The next stage, perhaps, are tended by the mother for a few days or hours: until at last, when we reach the highest creation, man, he is dependent on father and mother's care for many years. And how helpless the little baby is. It cannot walk at once, like the little lamb; it wouldn't live an hour if loving hearts didn't care for it and loving hands minister to it. Why is this? Because God wishes man to learn the secret of perfect love—the love of three is the perfect love: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are united in such a bond of perfect love. So the father, the mother, and the children form God's ideal of perfect human love. The love of two may be selfish, but when the two unite to care for others, their selfishness is driven out and true love reigns supreme. Can it be that there is a form of

religion that calls itself the love of God, which is really selfish, because it is the love of two and not the perfect love? A religion which seeks for self-gratification here and personal salvation hereafter, and that could never cry as St. Paul cried in the depth of his yearning for his people's salvation, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

IV

Isa. xlix. 1–13.

We might be tempted to think that the laws God made for the Children of Israel to keep them from intercourse with other nations, show a desire on God's part to curb and discourage a large-hearted interest in their neighbours. We must, however, consider that God was dealing with a child race, one not fully trained and developed, and then the reason for these laws will be brought home to us. The nations surrounding that child race were sunk in wickedness. They had lost all knowledge of God and practised the most immoral religious customs. Just as no earnest missionary would allow his little, innocent child to go to the degraded heathen ceremonies, so God said—Thou shalt have nothing to do with the Canaanites and their enormities. It would not mean that the

missionary did not care for the poor heathen. No! He would say—I will train my child in purity, obedience, and Christian devotion, and some day he will be able to help these poor souls, lost in ignorance and licentiousness. This, indeed, was the thought in God's heart when He trained the Children of Israel by the strict Mosaic Law, and this was to result, not merely in a blessing to the Israelites, but in a blessing for the world.

Students of world religions tell us that the Hebrew nation kept alive in the world the knowledge of the all-important truth, that God is righteous and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The gods of Greece and Rome were imagined as living lives of profligacy, the gods of India were worshipped with the most obscene rites, but the Children of Israel for ever bore witness to the truth that God is holy, and it was the training of the Law of Moses that had impressed that fact on their consciousness. That God is holy, and that He cares about man's holiness, is the contribution of Hebrew religion to the training of the world. That it was God's intention that other nations should share the blessings of Israel is shown plainly in the teaching of the Prophets, especially the prophet Isaiah (Isa. xlix. 6): 'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.' Again, in Isa. lx.,

'Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy Light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.'

Of course, these passages were especially fulfilled when Israel received, in the Incarnation, the fulness of light; but from the beginning, every bit of the knowledge of the Lord that was given to His people was meant ultimately as a blessing for the world. And that is just as true of every bit of knowledge of God, and of every ray of the light of His love that have been poured out upon you and me. Are we sharing that knowledge, are we handing on the Light?

Have you heard of the custom of the Eastern Church which takes place at the midnight mass on Easter Eve? All the worshippers assemble with unlighted tapers. The priest then lights his taper at the altar and passes it to the deacon, who lights his from it. He, in his turn, passes on the light to the acolytes and they to the congregation, and so the light spreads until the furthest corner of the darkened church becomes a blaze of light.

How far is my home, my village, my country, the world, catching the blaze from the light of my Christian faith and life?

V

S. John iii. 14–17.

'Ah! yes,' I can hear some one say, 'I know I ought to care for others' salvation, and I do subscribe to missions when there is a collection; but, I must say, I think the souls of the wicked and of the heathen very uninteresting. How dull missionary literature is, and really it is hard to get up any enthusiasm about the godless in our cities—they seem to belong to the great unwashed.'

Yes, we have, many of us, to confess that a love of souls is not one of the abiding characteristics of our religion. Well, let us be quite honest with ourselves and see that in so far as we do not care about the salvation of the souls of others, so far are we away in the darkness of hell and away from the light of heaven. If we have the mind of God, how shall we feel about the souls of others? Oh! we know—no need to repeat the text, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' Fathers and mothers know what must have been the yearning in the heart of God that would make Him give His dearly loved Son for Calvary in order to save men. That is the mind of God.

Think, too, what that Incarnation entailed for the Holy Son of God. Think of the giving

up. Picture a prince from a rich and happy home going down to live in rags in a loathsome slum, full of disease, cursing, and death: that giving up would be nothing to the giving up of the Holy Son of God, when He came to live and die for us in this evil world.

The giving of the Father and the giving up of the Son are the measure of God's desire for the salvation of the uninteresting heathen and the great unwashed. Ah! and it is the measure of something else: it shows us the longing in the heart of God that you and I may be made like Christ, that you and I may be as Christ is, glowing and ardent with an earnest love of souls. It is quite possible that in the Garden of Gethsemane my want of love may have been a heavier burden to His spirit than the immoral lives of the poor debased heathen, for He saw in that the failure of a bitter, gross ingratitude, a smiting in the face from one to whom He has tenderly ministered, while the other was only the failure of ignorance.

VI

S. Mark vi. 30–35.

Have you ever noticed how wonderfully interesting uninteresting things often become when we know more about them? We have

heard perhaps a hundred times of some country—say Greece or India—but it has only been a name to us. Then, perhaps, someone gives us a book about that country, or a traveller who has visited it comes and tells us about the people, the customs, the scenery. Then a friend takes us on a visit to that country and we live there, talk to the people, see its treasures. The place fills our thoughts. After that, how differently we feel when we hear the name of that country mentioned. What was uninteresting to us has become of untold interest.

Perhaps the souls of our fellowmen are uninteresting to us because we only think of them from time to time. We have not, as it were, lived with the thought of them perpetually in our hearts. It is not enough to think of the souls of the heathen once a year, when there is a sermon for S.P.G., and about the souls of our neighbours when, perhaps, there is a parochial mission going on. We may, perhaps, think of the wickedness of the souls of some who live near us, and of the pitiable failures of the clergy and, of course, condemn them with no unmeasured terms: but this is not the way for them to become interesting to us, and for us to learn to yearn, as Jesus yearns, for their salvation and sanctification. If we are honest with ourselves, shall we not have to confess that our neighbours' eternal welfare has very little place

in our God-ward thought? We are so little conscious of their souls. We meet a dozen people we know when we go out shopping. We speak to this one or that in the road, we may talk about them in our homes and repeat—I fear—often unkind things of them; but how often do we talk to God of them? I knew someone once who always, when she had been out and met people she knew, used to kneel down in her room and say a little prayer for them. How different would be our attitude to people, how much more interesting they would become, if we thought of them more in this way. The difficult neighbour, the exacting employer, the inefficient servant, the unsatisfactory parish priest, would become not just wearisome burdens to be endured, but interesting souls to be helped and saved.

VII

Phil. iv. 8.

But it is not merely by constant intercessory prayer we can help our neighbours, for, all unknowingly, our souls are coming into touch with other souls all through our lives. It is a very striking thought that just as there is an atmosphere of air surrounding this earth in which waves of sound travel; and an atmosphere of

ether, filling, as we believe, the universe, in which waves of light and electricity travel ; so we are all living and moving in a spiritual atmosphere, in which thoughts and prayers travel. It has been well said that we are not bodies in each of which dwells a spirit, but we are spirits that have been clothed with a body. Yes, that ugly man down the road is a spirit capable of being one of the most beautiful things in God's creation. That uninteresting old woman, who dresses so queerly, is a spirit, and is possibly clothed with a shining garment of humility ; and between their spirits and mine there is a marvellous affinity. We can, in a wonderful way, affect each other. I said we *can* affect, I should have said we *do* affect each other. For every spirit is immersed in the spiritual atmosphere, and in that is perpetually sending out and receiving waves of thought and influence one to the other.

How often have we not said to a friend who made a remark, ' I was just thinking the same thing.' Of course, in some cases it may be the same circumstance has started the same train of thought in us and in them ; but over and over again I have noticed there was nothing to account for the coincidence—nothing indeed but that wonderful influence we have one on another by the power of our thoughts. How catching in a house is a temper, and how difficult it is to keep a bright spirit when one is in the com-

pany of depressed people. These are just the cases we can observe for ourselves; but perpetually, whether we discover it or not, we are passing on to our neighbours kind thoughts or hard thoughts, pure thoughts or evil thoughts, sad thoughts or happy thoughts: thoughts of sin and the devil or thoughts of God and His angels.

VIII

S. Matt. v. 21–23; 27–29.

This fact of the wonderful power of thought to influence others may partly account for our dear Lord's very strong condemnation of sins of thought. The law condemned murder, Christ condemned anger; the law condemned adultery, Christ condemned lust. Of course, to the all-seeing eye of God our thoughts are as visible as our actions are to our fellow men; and to His eye, which is 'too pure to behold iniquity,' a spirit is ugly that is occupied with a bad thought, but beautiful when it reflects the thoughts of God. But part of that ugliness or that beauty comes from the fact that it is the source of a foul flow of evil spreading to the souls around, or a fountain of swee., pure waters making the world a place for the growth of every beautiful flower of holiness.

It is rather a disquieting thought, that we

may not only be the origin of evil thoughts in the minds of others, but may in consequence be indirectly responsible for evil actions.

When Archbishop Benson was the Headmaster of Wellington he defended his action of punishing the whole school because certain boys had been guilty of certain sins, by saying to this effect: 'If the whole school had kept up a high tone of thought and word on that subject, this would never have happened, but the boys who wouldn't perhaps sin have lowered the thought of the school, and so the weak boys fell.' Can it be that I have made my brother to offend by sending out to him waves of greed, anger, or impurity by my thoughts? God grant it may not be so, but the possibility of it will make me very humble in my judgment of others, and very careful to keep my heart pure for the future.

IX

Ps. cxix. 9–16.

When considering this disquieting idea, that we may be more or less responsible for the evil thoughts and actions of our follow men, we must remember one thing. The Church has always taught that it is the thought that is kept and dwelt on, not the thought which passes through

our mind and is not harboured, for which we are responsible. The waves of thought are breaking round us in every direction; angels and devils, good men and bad men, are constantly sending them to us, but if we do not consent to them they are, as it were, checked by us, instead of being sent on their way with renewed velocity. The reiterated thought is the thought of power, not the passing thought. There is a story told of the building of a great bridge across a big river. The iron structure was in its place, but was not properly riveted, when one day, in the dinner-hour, a wandering fiddler came and played to the men. He played some piece in which a certain note was repeated several times, and the men were very much amused to find that the great iron bridge was vibrating in response to that note. Probably, you have heard some church window vibrate in the same way to a particular note on the organ. The men asked the musician to play the note again and again, and the roar of the bridge got louder and louder. Just then the engineer who was building the bridge rushed out from his office and cried, 'For God's sake, man, stop that!' And he explained to the men that that vibration, started by the little fiddle, might be enough to bring the whole structure, in its present unfinished condition, to the ground.

One note from the little fiddle would not

have done it, but the reiterated note was full of power for destruction. When the bad thought comes into your mind do not reiterate it. Check it with a holy thought, a prayer, and then the poor weak brother may receive, at the same time as he receives the temptation to sin, the thought of God to help him to resist.

X

Ps. xviii. 25, 26; cxix. 36, 37.

When we are considering the effect of our thoughts on the thoughts of others, we must not only think of what are the results of bad thoughts: good thoughts are quite as penetrating, quite as powerful. Have you never met anyone of whom you said, 'It does me good just to be with him.' It may have been some invalid tied to a bed of pain, or an old man and woman very near the end of life's journey. Or it may have been some active woman, the centre of a tender home. It was not what your friend said so much that did you good, very likely he or she was more a listener than a talker. It wasn't what they did, but somehow when you could spend half an hour or an hour with them you came away refreshed, strengthened. What was it that filled their room with peace? Surely it was an atmosphere of beautiful thoughts.

Some people are nowadays fond of talking of 'auras,' a sort of halo that they say surrounds every human being. They say one will have a red halo, another a blue or some other colour, and that certain people have the power to see these auras. Well, whether this is true or not, I am perfectly certain that an atmosphere of thought hangs round certain of God's saints, in which the weak find strength, the frightened courage, and the weary rest. 'With the clean thou shalt be clean, with the froward thou shalt learn frowardness.'

If a mother wants to bring up her children to be pure, let her take care that her thoughts are pure. It is not enough to guard the words or the actions, guard the thoughts. 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.'

We must remember, too, that it is not simply in the region of religious thoughts that we may help each other. What a stimulus to a young mind it is to be with someone who takes a keen interest in God's world of nature, in science, in art, in 'whatsoever things are of good report.'

Some days it is good for us to use our imaginations and picture to ourselves what our souls might be like if they fulfilled God's plans for them perfectly. Picture, then, what a home of joy and peace we might create, filled with

thoughts of loving sympathy, tender faithfulness, patient endurance of difficulties. No, I think our thoughts must rise higher than that, glad surmounting of difficulties, cheerful patience with others' failings, keen joy in everything that is beautiful, pure, and good. That is what we might make of our homes and what we should make of them, if our thoughts for the sake of others reflected the thought of God.

XI

Col. iv. 2–4 ; Acts xii. 5–10.

By our thoughts we may be indeed our brother's keeper, and the solemn thing is, we never know where the waves will stop. That friends influence each other at a distance, I have no manner of doubt. Two girls, who had been at school together, wrote to each other about once a month after they left school. At first they had no special days for writing, but at last they had to fix the dates, because they found that month after month they used to sit down and write to each other on the same day, a wave of thought having apparently passed from one to the other, and so their letters crossed. Our thoughts go out from us, and God only knows where their influence will stop. You throw a pebble into a pool and the ring of ripples spreads

out and out further and further, till the edge of the pool is reached. Waves have a wonderful way of going on and on, until something stops them. It is told that when there was an eruption in the volcano on the Island of Krakatoa, in the middle of the Pacific, the shock caused a wave in the crust of the earth that went four times right round the world (registering itself on the delicate seismic instruments as it went) before it came to rest. Marvellous forces of nature; but never forget that spiritual forces are every whit as strong. God is the source of all force, and the force of Spirit is the strongest of all—for God is Spirit.

If we have someone we love, or someone we want to help at the other side of the world, send them a beautiful thought of faith and trust, joy and love; but link it on to the immeasurable force of our God. Let the thought be a prayer. They say that sound travels more than 12 miles a minute, that light comes from the sun, 9,000,000 of miles in $7\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, that an electric signal is nearly instantaneous in its action at the other side of the world. But faster than light, quicker than electricity, the voice of prayer travels round God's world: yea, and further than that, into the region where our departed friends are waiting for their final perfecting of bliss—yea, up to heaven itself.

The mistake we often make is that, when we

pray, we think we are praying to a God miles and miles away, far from us in heaven, and we reach out and strain as it were to make Him hear and send us an answer. Yet all the time God is here with us, waiting in all the majesty of His Almighty power to do for us all that is best for us and ours; waiting to reinforce, as it were, that beautiful thought of faith and trust, joy and love, that we may send out to help and comfort our dear ones by the wonderful power of prayer. And then, just when all seems dark to them, and they do not know what to do and how to face the future, a wonderful peace and faith comes to their souls, and they go forth gladly and brightly to do their duty, little realising—many of them—that that help came from the thought of a loving heart hundreds of miles away, reinforced by all the thought and the Power of God.

XII

S. John ii. 14–17.

An American writer has said that the thought atmosphere that people create hangs round the rooms they have inhabited and the things they have used, and is the source of the strong feeling of association that we experience often in our lives.

If this is true, it gives a reason why God has always guided His Church, first in the Old Testament among the Jewish people and later in the Christian Dispensation, to put aside and consecrate holy places. No atmosphere of buying and selling, cheating or money-getting, must desecrate the Temple of God. It is one of the few cases when the Incarnate Son of God showed bitter indignation, when He found such desecration going on. God's house must be full of an atmosphere of prayer, an atmosphere that brings naturally to people the thought of God.

Only in the very debased ages of the Christian Church have consecrated buildings been used for other things than the worship of God, and may God keep the Catholic Church from allowing its sacred buildings to be so profaned.

Have you ever noticed that some churches seem to have that atmosphere of prayer more than others? In those churches the services feel more real; and even in the empty church, it seems natural to go down on one's knees. It is easy to bow the head and worship, and God feels very near. Have you ever thought what the reason for this is? Surely it is because earnest and faithful souls have, by the depth of their faith and the devotion of their worship, created that atmosphere of prayer which is so helpful. Are we conscious of the fact that we can, by the earnestness of our prayers during the services

in church, help those around us? How easily we confess wandering thoughts in prayer, if we ever trouble to confess them at all, and yet those wandering thoughts may have been doing the devil's work by hindering other souls from worshipping God. The angels and the archangels are ever there, trying by their devotion to raise the earthbound hearts of men to the very throne of God; while we, perhaps, with thoughts of markets and money, of pleasure or even of sin, have been dragging back the hearts for whom Christ died.

XIII

Rev. v. 11–14.

The Catholic Church has always realised the presence of the angels and all the company of heaven at the service of the Holy Eucharist. In every Liturgy in Christendom, the angels are spoken of as joining in the great song of worship, Holy, Holy, Holy, before the Altar of God. The angels gathered round the manger throne of the King of Kings, and bowed in wondering adoration before the great mystery of the Incarnation: and, surely, still those angels wonder and adore, wherever God in His marvellous condescension manifests Himself on earth, in the extension of the Incarnation—the Holy

Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. Unbelieving man thought nothing of the Babe of Bethlehem, just as the world nowadays can see but bread and wine in the Blessed Sacrament; but the angels know, the angels worship, for they see that God is most beautiful when He is hidden; that His power is greatest when He seems most helpless; that He is clothed with the greatest glory when He is wrapped in the garment of humiliation. Into the atmosphere of angels' adoring love we enter as we draw near the Blessed Sacrament, and how it rests and helps our weak spirits as we make our Communion at the Altar, or we kneel before the tabernacle.

Yes, thank God, we are helped, but remember we can in turn help others by our devotion, or hinder them by our want of love. Let us see to it that in the worship of the Church we are indeed on the side of the angels.

XIV

S. John xvii. 21–25.

It is not only the devotion of the angels that helps us in our Eucharistic worship; with them are joined 'all the company of heaven.' All the spirits of just men made perfect are ready to help us, their brethren, during our time of probation.

Surely the Russian Church is right in allowing

its people to ask for the prayers, not only of canonised saints, but also of any saint known to them, who has departed this life in the fear of God: saintly fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, friends we have loved in Christ and who have been called up higher, are very near to us when we draw near to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We are all like the spokes of a wheel, the nearer we get to our centre Jesus Christ, the nearer we get to each other. Yes, close to us are those we have loved who have gone before, close to us are Our Lady and all the saints, close to us are the angels and archangels, and with that wonderful stream of worship and adoration our poor prayers mingle and have their value, for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls—for are we not all part of the Communion of Saints?

XV

Rom. v. 6–9; 1 Cor. xi. 26.

How few of us make as much use as we might, for the good of others, of that perpetual pleading of Christ's death in the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist. We know, for we have been taught, that nothing avails so much before God for the souls of men as the Sacrifice of His dear Son on Calvary. That precious death is perpetually

being shown forth and pleaded in heaven by Christ, and on earth on the altars of the Church, when the Lamb, as it has been slain, is presented before the throne of God.

What sort of prayers are the most likely to be granted by men and women to their fellow men? Are they not the humble prayers? How very annoying it is if any one asks a favour of us in a way that shows he expects us to grant it. We all feel that the right attitude for a petitioner to us is a humble attitude, and yet I am not sure that we are always humble in our attitude to God, when we pray to Him. Do we not sometimes almost feel self-satisfied at having taken the trouble to intercede for others? Yet what have we to plead on their behalf? We have not been so true to God that we can expect God to give us what we ask for those we love. Surely it is the trusted, faithful servant, not the careless, faithless one, that you would get to intercede for you to the Master. Who are we that we should expect the Master to listen to us? This thought brings home to us the strength and comfort of offering our prayers at the Holy Eucharist. We plead for our dear ones, not our love, but Christ's love for them, as shown forth by His death on Calvary. We link our prayers with the ceaseless intercession of the strong well-beloved Son of God.

And think what a wonderful reservoir of

force there has been made for us by the sacrifice of God's Holy Son. I have seen a drawing once, made for the teaching of a child, in which a great power-house for the making of electricity was first drawn. It was made just like an ordinary factory, with a tall chimney rising right into the air, and then the teacher drew across the chimney a short bar, and it became a Cross. And the child was shown that, just as from the power-house wires went in all directions, to convey force and power to all the country round, so from the Cross of Christ flows forth grace and power, through the Sacraments of the Church, to the whole world. We shudder sometimes when we think of the awful power concealed in a live electric wire; a skull and crossbones is put on every standard bearing such across Italy, to warn people that whosoever should touch a live wire would die. Yes, that small innocent-looking piece of wire has the power of life and death in it. It carries, perhaps, force enough to work every machine in the country or to kill everyone for miles round. And yet the force is as nothing to the force that is concealed in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; for what is concealed there is the whole power of Almighty God Himself. Yes, every power won for us, every bit of love shown forth for us by that perfect Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary, is waiting for us to claim and use, for the blessing

and help of those we love. Yes, waiting for *us* to use, for it seems to be part of God's plan for the world, that we should learn to realise our solidarity as a race and our dependence one on another, by seeing that He often waits for us to co-operate with Him before He pours out on our fellow men the riches of His Grace. Surely we will co-operate with Him? Surely we will, whenever we come to the Holy Eucharist, plead the wonder of His love, the power of His sacrifice, for the sake of some poor souls needing help. Never should we neglect to have a special intention, as it is called, whenever we go to mass.

Think of the many for whom we have to plead, not only for our dear ones alive and dead, but also for those we meet in our life's business—those who work for us, or for whom we work, our parish priests, our soldiers and sailors, the missionaries to the heathen in their difficult work. Oh, the number is legion of those who need the grace and blessings won on Calvary. Pray for them, plead for them, day after day, that so they may share the blessings of God's unutterable love.

XVI

1 Cor. xii 26–28; S. James v. 16.

Many of us would say, 'Well, there is one part of my religion that concerns only myself and God,

it is my repentance, my confessions.' No, we are wrong there. We have already seen how that by sins of thought we may be often far more responsible than we think for the sins of those around us. But whether that is true or not, there is not a shadow of doubt that every sin committed by a member of Christ affects the whole body of the faithful. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. I suppose there is nothing on earth helps the devil's work in this world so much as the sins of communicants. How many souls have been kept back from coming to God by the dishonesty of this man, the temper of that woman, a man and a woman both pledged to renounce the devil and all his works, and who have perhaps knelt to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. I am not referring now so much to the sins of hypocrites who are, of course, simply and solely children of the devil, but to the sins of communicants who really want to serve God and perhaps think they are doing so rather well. Do not some of us know the temptation to give up—shall we say—confession, because So-and-So, who goes to it, seems so hard in her judgments or so ungovernable in her temper? Yes, and everyone of us by our sins have made it easier for our fellows to forsake God and to serve the devil.

In the realisation of what our sins mean to God we may say, 'against Thee only have I

sinned' ; but, remember, part of that sin against God is the injury done to God's children, the members of Christ, the souls for whom He died.

It is in acknowledgment of that injury, done to our fellow Christians, that the Church has instituted confession to God before God's priest instead of confession to God alone. The confession used to be made before the whole body of the Church in the open congregation, but it was found not to minister to righteousness, and so the rule began for it to be made before the priest, as the Church's representative. It is a very striking thought that in every branch of the Catholic Church, East and West, except in the Anglo-Saxon branch, confession before a priest is made obligatory. It is left for us to judge whether our consciences are troubled by any weighty matter, that is, mortal sin, before we need feel obliged by the commands of our Church to go to a priest for confession.

Yes, it is certainly true that, by our sins of thought, word, and deed, we injure our neighbours ; but, thank God, our repentances also help them. A really true, humble, penitent soul is a great help to God in His work of destroying evil. What stops so many of His plans is the pride in the heart of Christians. Pride is often the last sin to be driven out of the heart of the Christian, and yet spiritual pride is one of the most deadly of all sins. No, it is not the proud soul that can

help others, it is the humble soul that has bowed itself in penitence before the Cross of Christ, acknowledging that it is nothing and is able to do nothing, yet placing itself in the hands of the Holy God to be used as and how He will for the food of others : such a soul *does* help others.

XVII

2 Cor. xii 7–11.

God is ever striving to help us, His children, to be humble. Every sacrament, ordained in the Catholic Church, helps to make us feel our littleness. A man may have the eloquence of a Chrysostom and the administrative power of a Napoleon, but he cannot rule in God's Church until he has knelt at the feet of a fellow man to receive his commission and consecration as a Bishop. We cannot consider ourselves as the chosen vessels of heaven to whom God speaks face to face, for every one of us has to go to some fellow sinner to receive the gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and comfort, in Confirmation, and the still greater gift of God's Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Do not mistake me. I do not mean that God never reveals Himself directly to us independently of Sacraments. To some more, to some less, He is ever speaking through our consciences. But the most privileged

of God's saints, one who sees visions and hears God's voice constantly, still has, according to God's ordinance, to go to a fellow man for the message of absolution and for the other Sacraments of the Church. Then how humbling is that Sacrament of Penance where we kneel and tell our sins, our own sins, our most grievous sins. There is another way in which God tries to help us to be humble. One of the reasons why God places us on beds of sickness is, I am sure, to help us to be humble. Perhaps we have been clever leaders of men, but God takes our power from us. The brain that has been so wise becomes clouded, the hands that have been so useful lose their power, the feet that have been so active are tottering and weak, the whole person which has had such an influence in the world is laid by in helplessness and weakness, dependent on the loving care of those whom we have sometimes considered inferior to ourselves.

We do not all learn the lessons of humility on a bed of pain, but such a place may be used as a school for acquiring their virtue. I think very often, when people rebel against sickness, it is because their pride so intensely dislikes to be dependent on others ; and yet, if we think the facts out carefully, we are one and all dependent on each other every day of our lives. How many brains have thought, how many

hands have wrought, before a loaf of bread is laid upon our table. Men have risen early, and late taken rest, in order that the ground might be ploughed, the seed might be sown, the corn might be reaped, harvested, and ground, carried by train very likely, made into bread, and brought to our door. Perhaps we think, well, they are all paid for their work. Yes, in a sense they are, and so, maybe, the nurse is paid who tends you on your bed of sickness, but somehow in the latter case you realise more that you are dependent on such a nurse, and that no money really pays all our debt to those who care for and who minister to us. Surely God has arranged that the dependence on the help and care of others, which is man's lot when he enters this world as a baby, shall be the usual condition of his existence, until his eyes are closed in death and the hands of others lay him in the grave. No man liveth to himself, that life which he owes to others' care must be used, just because it is owed, in the service of others.

XVIII

1 Peter ii. 21, 25.

There is another aspect of sickness and suffering which is a help to many people, and it would be well to think of it. Many earnest

souls have asked the question, If God loves the world, why does He allow sickness and suffering to mar the lives of His children? Of course, they say, in some cases people are seen to be spiritually the nobler for that suffering, but it seems a cruel way to have made the world that such suffering should be necessary. And then, too, many people suffer who appear not to be made better by it, and who can't be drawn to God through their suffering, because they know nothing of Him. This is all very true, and before trying to answer the objections we must own that suffering is a mystery, and that we shall never understand fully what the meaning of it is until in heaven we look into the eyes of a God Who is crowned with thorns and Whose hands and feet bear the marks of the cruel nails. Christ knows the meaning of suffering, for He has suffered; and, perhaps, by looking at His life we shall learn something about it.

I am not concerned now with the physical explanation, if I may so call it, of suffering. Of course, pain is a danger signal which prevents animals and men doing themselves harm. The man who drops a hot iron because it hurts saves thereby his hand, and one does not see how he could be saved from the dangers of fire in a better way than by his pain. But, as I said, it is not the physical, but the spiritual, reason for suffering that we want.

We all know, even the most unbelieving of us, that there is something wrong with the world. Man, the highest creature in it, has somehow got a twist; and, instead of behaving as the lower animals do, in the way that is best for himself and his species, goes directly against the laws of health and happiness; in other words, he sins. This is a fact which no one can deny and is not the invention of religious teaching. What religion teaches us about this fact is that it comes about by the misuse of God's great gift to man, his free will. It tells us also that God will not take away that gift, though it has been misused, but instead, by His own unutterable love and intense suffering, He tries to win man back to use that will aright. He will do anything, suffer anything, even to the Cross of Calvary, if He only may succeed in curing the evil in man's nature by turning his will towards love and happiness.

We will notice, first, that God chose the way of suffering in order to help His children. He said, 'No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself.' There must be something noble in suffering or it would not have been God's choice. Christians in every age have felt the comfort of knowing that they are following Christ along the path of suffering, and that He is beside them in their pain.

XIX

Isa. liii. 3, 9.

Why did God choose the path of suffering when He came to earth to save us poor sinners? I think it was because He knew what was in the men whom He had made; knew of the wonderful strength, of the beautiful power of pity which the sight of undeserved suffering draws forth in the human breast. A little story told to teach children about the atonement illustrates what I mean. There was once a widow who had two sons whom she had to leave for awhile and go on a journey. While she was away the boys got into mischief. When the mother came home she found her two little boys had been robbing a baker's till and had spent the money. What grieved her more than anything was, they both seemed so hardened. They were so small that the baker would not prosecute, and he left the mother to punish the boys as she thought fit. The widow was a good woman, and was heart-broken at the fact that her darlings had started on the road that ends in grief and ruin. What could she do? As she prayed, a thought came to her, and she drew her lads to her, and this is what she said: 'My boys, you ought to live on bread and water

until every penny is paid back, but you are delicate and not strong enough to do it yourselves. I am going to do it for you.' Day after day the boys sat down to their porridge, their milk, and other good things, and they saw their loving mother with nothing but crusts of bread to eat and water to drink. For a day or two the boys said nothing, but at last they could stand it no longer. They threw their arms round their mother's neck and said, 'Oh, Mother, let us do it; we deserve it, you don't. We are so sorry we took the money. Please let us bear the punishment.' And then the mother could forgive them, for they had learnt to hate their sin. Yes, it was my pride, my selfishness, my temper, that deserved Calvary, and God—not I—bore the suffering When we have learnt the lessons God would teach us by it, namely, the hatefulness of sin and the wonderful love of God, then, and not till then, are we ready to be forgiven.

The sinner loves his sin and hates his God; the absolved soul hates his sin and loves his God.

And what is it that has changed his heart? Is it not that Divine gift of pity, which has been drawn forth in his heart by the sight of the outstretched form of the Son of God, suffering undeservedly for our fault?

XX

Zech. vii. 9; 1 S. Peter iii. 8.

God-like pity! Can it be that God uses the sufferings of man to draw forth God-like pity in the hearts of those around? Can it be that my sufferings are partly allowed for this purpose?

Just picture what this world would be like if, while sin still reigned in men's hearts, all suffering ceased to afflict us. What a hard race we should become! All the pity, more than half the sympathy, most of the generosity, would vanish out of the world. What is it that makes the rough navvy so tender to his wounded comrade? What is it that makes that coarse, hard man step so gently to the bedside of the little cripple? What is it that makes the rough, careless boy give up his play to walk miles for a doctor? Is it not the tenderness of heart drawn out by the sight of suffering?

A lady, who was dying of cancer and suffering terribly, once said to a friend who was visiting her, 'I cannot think what I have done that God should have to make me suffer like this.' The friend replied that she was sure the suffering must not be looked upon as a punishment, and then tried to put before the sufferer this idea, that the sufferings were being borne for the sake of those around. The lady didn't say anything at

the time, but the next day she mentioned how very good the servants in the house had been to her. She said, 'I didn't think before I was ill people could be so good.' The answer, of course, was, that if the dear soul had not suffered those kind friends round could not have been so good. She was allowed to see a little bit in this world, that which will come as an intense surprise to many sufferers in the next world, that many souls have been helped to God and to holiness by seeing their sufferings so patiently endured.

What crowds of souls shining with the light of unselfishness and love will some patient sufferers bring in their train to the throne of God at the last day; then, indeed, they will 'see of the travail of their souls and be satisfied.'

XXI

Col. i. 23, 24.

The saints of God have attributed an even deeper significance to the sufferings of Christ's people than this power, that it has to call forth the natural virtues and fruits of pity in the hearts of those that look on. S. Paul speaks of 'filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His Body's sake, the Church.' What does it mean? Surely this; that because we are part of the Body of Christ we can share in the

meritorious sufferings of our Lord Jesus, our Head. Every suffering that is offered in union with the Sacrifice of Christ helps in His work for the souls of men. What does 'in union with the suffering of Christ' mean? Surely, two things: First, that that suffering is deliberately offered to God for the souls of others, remembering that of itself it would have no value, unless Christ had suffered on Calvary for those we wish to help; and, secondly, the suffering must be borne somewhat in the same patient, willing spirit that Jesus showed forth transcendently in what He bore on that first Good Friday.

The comfort of this thought is, that even the hidden sorrows and sufferings, of which it may be said that 'God is the only looker-on,' may have their value in helping the souls we love.

A missionary, who had had many years of work in a very unhealthy climate, work which entailed much sickness, long tramps through loose sand when feeling weak and ill, said he found great comfort in suffering each aching pain, each feeling of weariness, in union with the Sacrifice of Calvary, for the souls of the poor heathen amongst whom he was labouring. Are there no souls that we care for—friends, dear ones, people in special temptation or danger—for whom we would like to obtain blessings? Then let us welcome in a Christlike spirit every pang of suffering sent to us, and offer it up for such to

the God of sufferers, in union with the sufferings of His own dear Son, and, believe me, it will not be in vain.

XXII

Micah vi. 8.

How different would be our attitude towards times of trouble and suffering if we realised that they were precious opportunities for winning blessings for those we love. The old mother, who hates to be a burden to her children, would welcome the weakness and pain just as she willingly bore for them the pangs of bringing them into the world. *That* was borne to give them earthly life, and maybe *this* will be the means, if only the sufferer is Christlike, of giving, or at least of deepening, eternal life.

Then, too, how the thought that suffering may have been sent to others in order to help us to be more tender, will influence our attitude to the sufferers. It will take away any trace of impatience with them, and at the same time will prevent us priding ourselves on the fact, for we shall feel that we cannot let them suffer in vain. It is very humbling to remember how often in the past we have let this happen. Times when friends and neighbours have been bearing weakness, sickness, and suffering just in order, perhaps,

that God may make us more tender, thoughtful, and self-sacrificing; and we instead have been wrapped up in self, and neglected to show them the kindness they so sorely needed.

XXIII

Phil. iv. 4; Gal. v. 22; Isa. xxvi. 3, 4.

There are many homes of sickness and suffering in this sad world, where we may learn loving sympathy. In return for what they teach us, do we not owe them a debt? What is the best way in which we can repay what we owe? Surely by entering such homes, carrying with us the wonderful gift of joy. A gift, a great gift, offered to us by the Holy Spirit: not simply for our own peace and comfort, but to be a blessing to all those around us.

Many Christians show forth the gifts of long-suffering, faith, meekness, and temperance, and, perhaps, also love, and yet quite fail to accept the gift which S. Paul puts next to love in the list of the fruits of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, is the order of the fruits; and so, surely, joy must be very important. In so far as Christians are habitually long-faced, so far have they come short of their Christian profession. But, you will say, it is so much easier for some faces to be joyous than others. Quite true! So it is much harder

for some people to keep their tempers than for others ; but you don't consider that excuses them from the duty of trying to control it !

Shall we see what are the true sources of a Christian's joy, and so learn whether we can help this fruit of the Spirit to develop in our lives ? Surely, the first source is an absolute trust that everything in our lives is ordered for us by a loving God ; that there is no room for anxiety if we have, as it were, put our hand into God's and are allowing Him to guide us.

The second is a constant habit of thanksgiving. How many blessings there are we take as a matter of course, and quite forget to thank God for. Our homes, our friends, the beauty of the blue sky, the springing flowers, the fresh air of the morning, the shade of the trees—why, our whole day might be filled with thanking God ! I do not mean we should always be saying it out loud, but our hearts should be singing it all day long and our faces should shine with the joy of it. Then, too, think of the thankfulness there should be in our hearts for all the goodness to be found in this world. To be sure, there is plenty of sin and wickedness ; but, if we look for it, we shall find much goodness in lives that, perhaps, at first sight seem to be given to evil. Every bit of goodness in the world is the work of God's Holy Spirit. Let us thank Him for it. Some of us are fond of paying attention to the devil's

work in the world and forgetting to notice God's work. Yet this is distinctly against God's orders. 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things.' Yes, look at the good, think of the good, and thank God by holy joy. For, as someone has said, 'Joy is the grace we say to God.'

XXIV

1 Thess. ii. 1, 20; iii. 9.

The third way of striving for Christian joy is to forget self and try to make others happy. There is absolutely no way more certain of banishing joy than to be always thinking of oneself. It has been said that our lives should be like beautiful, sparkling, running streams, and not like stagnant pools, foul from green scum and filth. Day after day, love and beauty and joy flow to us by the goodness of God, and day by day we are meant to pass them on to those around us. If we make a pool, as it were, of ourselves, and try to keep the love, joy, and beauty for ourselves, they grow stagnant and foul; but by passing them on to those around us they will sparkle and increase in beauty and glory until they are like unto a rainbow-hued waterfall.

How curiously things seem to react one upon another! We began by saying we must bring a gift of joy to others, and now we find that the only way in which we can *get* joy for ourselves is by perpetually passing it on to others.

Is it not Professor Drummond who says, 'God has left the happiness of our fellow man almost entirely in our hands?' We cannot make men holy, but we can make them happy, and one of the ways in which we can do this is by overflowing ourselves with true Christian joy. I needn't labour the point, we all know how depressing it is to live with gloomy, discontented people. One person, with a sulky temper and a thunderclouded brow, darkens a whole household; while, as our children's hymn says, 'With smiles of peace and looks of love, light in our dwellings we may make.'

Perhaps we are tempted to say, 'Oh, but I suffer so from indigestion and that is very depressing.' Yes, certainly, that is true; but perhaps it would be well to remember that if indigestion sometimes causes discontent, discontent often causes indigestion. I think we might say that to trust the present and the future in God's hands, to be thankful every day and all day, to be trying to make others happy, is not only the rule for happiness but also an excellent rule for health.

XXV

Ps. cxxxix.

We have been seeing together how every part of our spiritual life has its effect on the lives of others: that our thoughts, our worship, our sacramental life, our sufferings, our joys, our penitence, were all meant to help our fellow men. That if we forget this aspect of our religious life, we are apt to degenerate into that contradiction in terms, self-centred Christians. Yet some may ask, Is there not a danger of our becoming prigs and self-righteous souls, if we are always thinking of the effect of our actions on other people?

Well, we may be quite sure that, if the devil can, he will turn every holy thought and action into a means for our undoing, so it behoves us to think carefully how we may circumvent him.

First, I would point out that, in all that has so far been said, there has been nothing about the effect of our actions on people, but only about the effect of our thoughts and spiritual influence. There has been nothing about going to church for the sake of example or of outward devotion in church with the same object; but it has been all about hidden spiritual things, known only to the eye of God.

Ah, there we have the key of the matter:

God's eye can see the deepest things in our hearts, and nothing but genuine, humble, earnest, spiritual experiences will be of any avail in helping our fellow men. God must come first, before others come in at all; for, indeed, without Him and His Grace, we can do and be absolutely nothing. The more perfectly we place our wills in His loving hands, the more constantly we turn to Him moment by moment, the more we shall be able to draw our brother with us to the throne of God. Suppose you were walking with a friend by the side of a deep river, and were to see a child struggling in deep water. If neither of you could swim, I could imagine you might say, 'Hold my hand tight and I will try to reach him.' Into the water you would go, holding tight to your friend's hand, and so you might draw the child to safety. Would it be wise to leave go of the strong hand of your friend? No, it would be losing your only means of saving life. In the same way we must hold firmly by the pierced Hand of our Friend, if we would help others, and it will really be *that* Hand, not ours, which will draw the struggler to safety.

If we were to ask those saints who have been the means of bringing many souls to God, which words of theirs had been most effectual, I think they would say, 'The words that were winged by an instantaneous upward prayer.'

We think it was their cleverness, their magnetism, that helped; while really it was God's almighty power, which they invoked by their prayer, that worked the miracle of grace. A Christian is helpless if alone, but we might almost say he is almighty if God uses him. We must aim at being like the chisel in the hand of the master artist. Lying still, as it were, in that Hand of power, not trying to carve itself, but ready at any moment to bring to perfection the thing of beauty that has all been planned in the mind of the Master.

XXVI.

S. Luke ii. 51, 52.

Shall we look awhile into the mind of the Master Who has planned to use us as instruments with which He can beautify and perfect the souls of those around us? We must look humbly, never dreaming that we can really see all that mind contains, for it is the mind of the Infinite God. We could hardly have grasped anything of that mind if He had not, in His great condescension in the Incarnation, manifested, in a perfect manhood, the wonderful mind of God. At the beginning of this book I said that if we were to learn the mind of God this Lent, it must be from God's Son. So let us now turn our thoughts to

Him and see how, in His earthly life, He set us an example of living every moment of it, even His spiritual Godward life, for the sake of others. '*For their Sakes I sanctify Myself.*' We shall never be self-righteous if our eyes are fixed on the form of the humble Son of Man. It is because men turn away from Him to gaze on self that they make their work for others so self-righteous and they themselves such a failure.

If you or I had set to plan what would be the suitable way in which Almighty God should become Incarnate, do you think we should ever have suggested the birth of a helpless baby in a stable? To be sure, there were angels in heaven, and worshipping shepherds, and kings, to make the birth different from others. Yet, to the world at large and, if we may reverently say so, to Christ Himself, He was only just an ordinary Baby. He learnt to talk and walk as others learn, He had His tumbles and little childhood troubles. He went to the village school and was hot and tired there, and was doubtless amongst rough, rude boys, and pushed about by selfish, careless children. He, doubtless, wanted to stay up when Mary told Him to go to bed. In short, He went through all the experiences of childhood. Why? Why did He have to increase in wisdom and stature? Why did He have, as it were, His growing pains? Surely, just for this —that He might be able to help the children.

Not for His own sake, not, in a sense for God's sake, but just for our sake, that from our very baby days we might learn from the Perfect Child, and might know that our Lord and God could sympathise with all our troubles.

Perhaps, however, in becoming a child God had the thought of the needs of parents quite as much as the needs of the child in His mind. How many mothers and fathers have been inspired to make a beautiful home for their little ones, by the thought of the Holy Family of Nazareth! One mother I knew, while waiting for the birth of her firstborn, kept constantly gazing at the picture of the Infant Saviour, and doubtless she was only one of thousands upon thousands of Christian mothers, in all ages of the Church, who have done the same. What blessings of character do such mothers win for their little ones, when their hearts are full of the thought of the Holy Child and their lips with prayers to His tender, loving heart! Truly, a real Christian home is the most beautiful thing in the world. 'Love of heaven to earth come down' indeed, for every Christian home has been inspired by the thought of the Holy Child, learning even to pray, at His mother's knee. What a mystery, God learning to pray! And yet it must have been so. His little hands were doubtless restless until they were held in hers. His little lips didn't know the words till His mother taught Him. He had to grow

and learn as we all did ; and why ? Because He lived to help others.

XXVII

S. Mark vi. 1–3.

Professor Drummond in one of his books points out how that God has arranged the world so that at least half of the waking time of the people in it is occupied in making chairs and tables, or doing what seems such very unspiritual things, for the sake of a livelihood. He brings out that, as far as we can see, God's reason for this is that such work is necessary for the development of character. In the Fourth Commandment, He not only commands a seventh day of rest, but six days of work, for His people, and those who neglect that command do it at their peril.

Such being God's plan of ordering the world when He came to earth in the Incarnation, He chose to consecrate for ever the life of toil by working with His hands for His daily bread. For twenty years out of His short life, Christ worked like any other labourer, through the hot hours of the day ; like them, He came home hungry and tired at night ; like them, He knew the monotony and drudgery of toil. He, doubtless, had to satisfy unreasonable customers, He

had to work with faulty tools, and the wood He fashioned in Joseph's workshop was not miraculously made perfect, it was as cross-grained and knotty as that worked up by any other carpenter. All the difficulties and trials that come to us in our daily work came to Jesus in His years of toil. How differently He might have arranged His life if He had liked. The Apocryphal Gospels are full of stories of miracles being worked to help Him and make His life different from that of other men; but the Inspired Gospel story, which has been declared to have the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the voice of the Church, never tells of a single miracle worked for His own advantage or for His own glory. Like other men He would live, like others He would labour, like others He would suffer, if only by any means He could save them.

Can we not feel how, by those patient, persevering years, He has made Himself the friend of every worker in the world? A friend who cannot sympathise is a contradiction in terms. A friend must know our needs, our longings, our joys, and our sorrows if he is to be a real heart-to-heart friend, who can help and cheer us on our way. Such a friend is the strong Son of God. When things are difficult we can say to ourselves, 'He knows.' When we are weary we can look up into the kind face which has

shown signs of weariness in the past. When in need of guidance we can take His hand, for He has been this way before, and can lead us to the land of Peace and Rest.

I wonder whether we try to sympathise with our fellow workers as Jesus does with us ?

XXVIII

S. Matt. viii. 19, 20.

But there are others in this world beside the workers who are earning a sufficient, if a simple, living. There are the very poor, the hungry, the helpless, the homeless. Men who are outcasts, women and children who have no home in this world, perhaps through their own fault, perhaps through the fault of others. Sometimes such people are very unattractive, and we try to shut our eyes to their existence ; if we see such sitting by the roadside we tend to hurry past them, for we would rather have nothing to do with such lives. But this was not the way of the Man Christ Jesus. Because He showed forth the mind of God, He made Himself homeless for the sake of the homeless ; He knew hunger and thirst for the sake of the starving ; He was despised for the sake of the despised ; He suffered as a murderer and a thief for the sake of the criminal ; the poor

outcast leper, who came to His feet, was touched and healed; no one was too loathsome for His love, too wretched and despised for Him to help. It is very wonderful, this glimpse of the mind of God.

Oh, my God, how far we are from that wonderful love that gives itself to the uttermost for the sake of the outcast and the wicked! Not from a height, to those in the depths, did He scatter His blessings; He was no condescending philanthropist; down into the depths He went Himself, through all their experiences, only excepting sin, so that He might take them by the hand, as it were, and lead them up to dwell with Him in the heights.

My God, burn out in me all self-righteous pride, that congratulates itself for every little thing done for others. Fill me with the spirit of Thine own dear Son, so that my whole life may be lived in absolute self-forgetfulness, for the sake of others.

XXIX

S. Matt. xxvi. 40.

Besides the extreme poor and the outcast, there are other souls in need of comfort and sympathy. Perhaps, in outward circumstances, they may be exceedingly well-to-do; they may live in big houses and be surrounded by every sign

of wealth and comfort, and yet God, Who can see into the hearts of all men, knows that they need much help and comfort, for they are lonely souls. Perhaps it is some mother who at one time had merry children playing around her home and a tender husband who made the sunshine of her life; now, that light of love has gone to shine in another world, and the children are grown up and scattered through the world—the mother is left alone.

Perhaps it is some widowed husband, the light of whose eyes has been taken from him by death. Or, God can see one whose friends don't understand them. He or she lives with those who have different ideals, different ways of looking at life, and the soul is lonely; it may be that in times past there has been one to sympathise, and now, by death or change, that one has been removed. God looked down into the hearts of thousands of His children and saw this aching loneliness. With God, to see a trouble is to long to share it. And so we find the life of the Incarnate Son of God marked by the same trouble of loneliness.

'How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing . . . and ye would not,' is the yearning of disappointed love. 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' is the cry of a soul misunderstood.

'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' shows the human longing for sympathy in trouble. The look that Jesus gave to S. Peter was the sad look of a disappointed friend; and surely what gave to the kiss of Judas its deepest bitterness to the Son of Man was, not that it was the precursor of a painful death, but that it was given by one with whom He had taken sweet counsel, and with whom He had walked in God's house as a friend. There is nothing sweeter in this world than the sharing of the highest spiritual things with a friend, and surely when such a friendship is broken and the friends go different ways, it leaves a blank that nothing can really fill. Nothing, indeed, but the love of the strong Son of God, Who, too, has been lonely, and Who is a 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother' and will never leave us or forsake us. He bore the loneliness just on purpose that He might sympathise with us; perhaps He has sent us the same trouble that we might be drawn to Him.

XXX

S. John xviii. 3–9.

In these days of war there is a trouble coming to thousands of men, aye, and women, which in peace would be far from the lives of most of us—I mean the danger of sudden death. Millions

of young soldiers have had to face that danger unflinchingly, and we must remember that many of them are not naturally callous and unafraid. It is not cowards only that feel fear, the bravest of the brave often feel the fear, but they overcome it, and so most certainly deserve to be crowned. In the streets of the French cities, in the overrun countries of Belgium, Serbia, Russia, in Armenia, there are thousands of women and children who have lived and moved in that atmosphere of danger. Out on the placid seas, again, where all seems smiling, that fear has lurked for the sailor and his passengers. Surely, Christ must have thought of all these when He planned His life on earth. Yes! When we are in moments of peril, we can turn our thoughts to two or three incidents in the Life of Jesus and find in them a message of help and comfort. Picture Him, rising from His calm sleep in the storm-tossed boat, and by one word, 'Peace, be still,' calming the awful waves. 'He ruleth the raging of the sea, and stilleth the waves thereof when they arise.' And that power still rests in the hands of the Son of God; only by His allowing will death come to you and me from the dangers of the sea, whether they are the dangers made by human hands, such as torpedoes, or by the powers of Nature. And if those loving hands allow death to come, they will gather us up and raise us to a land of peace and safety. Can we not

hear His tender voice saying to us, 'Wherefore didst thou doubt?'

As the young soldier marches up to take his place in the trenches for the first time, he may see Jesus as He went before the disciples in His eagerness to reach Jerusalem, the scene of His suffering and death.

If he falls into the hands of his enemies and knows not what his fate may be, he may recall the dear Lord going straight out from His agony to meet Judas and the soldiers; he will hear His ringing tones when He asks, 'Whom seek ye?' and the added words, 'I am He.' No hanging back, no running away, and yet the story of the agonized prayer, 'Let this cup pass from me,' shows that Jesus felt the horror and terror of what was coming on Him. In this Passion week we must have the thought of how steadfastly and patiently Christ went forward to meet that death, which, in His case, He knew was coming on Him. Perhaps, we may say, it is easier to meet certain death than uncertain. Do you feel like that? Then I can tell you the remedy. Accept the worst, as Jesus did in Gethsemane. Say as He did, 'Not my will, but Thine be done,' and we shall find we can go forward bravely and unflinchingly to meet whatever danger may come upon us, surely knowing that 'In His Will is our Peace.'

XXXI

S. Luke vi. 24; S. Mark x. 23–28.

There is no need to dwell on the noble way our dear Lord faced sorrow and suffering in order to help sufferers. Earlier in this book we dwelt on this, when we were seeing how our suffering might, like His, be borne gladly, patiently, for the sake of others. There is not a sorrow of heart, there is not a pang of pain borne in this world, with which Jesus cannot sympathise, for He has been tried in all points like as we are. We are all differently made, and to some a pain seems comparatively slight which to another is insupportable; but if we are highly sensitive and feel a terrible shrinking from suffering, we can turn to the most highly sensitive Man Who has ever lived, and know that from Him we can get the most perfect sympathy, for He, too, has suffered.

We have thought, then, of the various troubles that affect men, of the different sorts of life lived by them, and have seen how God planned His Incarnate life so that He might be a help and inspiration to all. Had He then no message, no word for those who are well-to-do? Has He not any inspiration for the rich? There are some very stern words said about the rich, and it behoves those of us who have riches to con-

sider them carefully. Stern indeed is the warning of the danger of eternal loss which hangs over those who possess earthly wealth. And while considering this, we must remember there were no millionaires in Palestine when Christ lived there; the rich men whom Christ knew would probably be thought very moderately wealthy in these days. A very small amount of wealth, if clung to and worshipped, will sink a soul down into the lowest depths, just as much as millions of money. We are told that even a rich man may be saved by the Grace of God, for 'with Him all things are possible.' What does this mean? Surely, that if each of us learnt to look on our wealth as God looks on it—if, indeed, we have the mind of God about our possessions—they will not be a curse, but a blessing.

There were a few cases in which money came, as it were, into the story of Jesus' life. You remember the story of Peter being told to catch a fish, and in its mouth to find the money needed by our Lord and Peter for their just debts. Surely this was a parable to teach men to see how money, however much we work for it, really comes from the hand of God. With what wonder and awe Peter must have looked on that coin! Omnipotence put it there, omniscience had shown Peter where to find it. How different our attitude to money would often be if we saw as clearly God's hands paying us

our wages or entering our dividends in our bank book.

Then, again, we are told of our Lord handling a penny, and giving the instruction to the questioning lawyer to ' give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' This shows us that there is in God's mind a distinct idea of the need of justice in the disposal of our wealth. Each man that has possessions has certain claims upon him because of those possessions ; his duty to his fellow men, his duty to his God, both in the worship of His temple and in the care of His poor.

These claims are clear and distinct ; we cannot feel any pride when we pay our tithes and think we are being very virtuous. We shall have failed in an elementary duty if we have not given to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

XXXII

Phil. ii. 6–9. ; S. Matt. iv. 8–12.

But there is yet a higher glimpse of the mind of God with regard to earthly possessions. When He became Incarnate He might have chosen to come to earth as the son of an earthly king ; He might have lived rolling in wealth ; but, instead,

He was born in a stable ; He had to work for His living. He set no value whatever on earthly wealth. When Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, He said, ' Get thee behind me, Satan,' and drove the devil from His presence. What was the bargain the tempter was trying to strike with Jesus ? All the kingdoms of the world as against the salvation of the souls of men. There could have been no salvation for us men if Christ had accepted earthly wealth and well-being. It was a choice between personal pleasure and love, and there could be no doubt on which side His choice would fall. Love, the desire for the welfare of others ; that is, the overmastering Passion of our Saviour's heart. Is it the Passion of our hearts ? How does out attitude to wealth show the Passion of our hearts ? Is the longing there to pour out of our wealth, to empty ourselves of luxury, or even of comfort, if by any means we may save some soul for whom Christ died ? Or is it like this : that we do not care how much people may be overworked and downtrodden, how much they may live in degrading surroundings, if only we can get our dividends ?

I fear that sometimes, even in religious matters, that selfish spirit prevails. Are there no churches with elaborate music and rich vestments which cannot spare a Sunday collection for missions ? Are there no Christians who wish the services of

their church to be arranged to suit their own convenience, and not the convenience of the labouring man or the hardworked mother ?

We must indeed be thankful for the beautiful services and Catholic privileges now within our reach, for which our parents only longed ; but we must remember that the glorious singing of the heavenly choirs, the sweet odours of heaven, the ineffable Light of the Presence of God, were deliberately left by the Son of God for the salvation of degraded man. The longing for the salvation of souls must be the Passion of our hearts if we are to follow in His steps.

XXXIII

Heb. xii. 3–4.

We have seen how our Lord ordered His life, so that He might sympathise with all in their difficulties. But He desired to do something more than sympathise. He longed to save. *Salvation !* What do we understand by that word ? To some it means a chance to enter heaven after having lived a self-pleasing life here. But this is an absolute delusion. Salvation means being saved from sin, and not from sin's punishment. How many of us have realised that there is no entry into heaven with one single sin uncured, and that when we have risen above every sin

we are in heaven, for ' the pure in heart shall see God ' ? We are so fond of excusing ourselves and saying it is my temperament ; I have the family temper, or ' I am constitutionally lazy.' Yes, I daresay we may be stating facts, but, remember, there is no room for a family temper in heaven ; the constitutionally lazy person is unfit for heaven until, by the merits of Jesus and by the power of His Grace, he or she has conquered this constitutional difficulty. ' Naught that defileth ' ever enters there. We make so light often of our sins, our failures. We haven't yet ' resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' Yet our dear Lord resisted unto blood, striving against our sins. And not only against sin in general but against our individual sins. So let us gaze, during this next week, at the Passion of our dear Lord ; as we read the story of His sufferings let us give our minds to them. With the Holy Spirit's guidance we shall see how each item of that suffering might be looked upon as the merited suffering for some sin of ours. We deserve the pain, but He bears it, bears it patiently, not because He has deserved it, but to make us hate our sins and trust to His love.

How often have we, as it were, looked on at the sin of others and passed by on the other side, if the sin didn't touch us ; and we have never stretched out a hand, much less faced discomfort and danger, to prevent its repetition. What

cowards we are in making protests against fashionable failings! And yet, if only we had boldly proclaimed the fact, that we know such to be against God's law, we might have helped some poor weak soul from being dragged down into the abyss.

XXXIV

S. Luke xix. 35–47.

We are drawing near in thought to the end of Christ's earthly life. To-morrow we shall see him ride in, the lowly King, to take His place upon the throne of the Cross. We shall in spirit watch the crowds bearing their waving palms, as they escort Him over the Mount of Olives and down into the valley of the Chedron, and so up to the city that He loved with such a tender love. We shall hear the shouts of Hosanna, which word, in its Hebrew significance, must have seemed to Jesus a call to Calvary. It was a shout given in honour of a king, but it meant, 'Save, I pray.' Yes, the King had come to save, but not by marching forth his chariots and horses to earthly battle, but by leading the great army of sufferers up the Mount of Calvary, there to train them, by the force of His example and by the power of His death, to spend and be spent for others.

Yes, the King has come to save, and to save to the uttermost. To save us even from the demon of Pride, that wicked spirit which is most persevering in his attacks on our souls, and who seems to have a power greater than that of any other demon to ruin those who think they are serving God.

Which of us has not had a tussle with that enemy, and sometimes have hardly known whether we have got him under our heel, or whether he has conquered us.

Perhaps the best test for us to apply to ourselves so that we may know what is our attitude to Pride, is to see how we bear popularity and how we bear humiliation. On that Palm Sunday morning we see our dear Lord at the height of His triumph. He is riding in on the ass, the royal steed of Palestine, very different from the humble donkey of our northern clime. He is surrounded by crowds hailing Him as their Saviour and their King. Palm branches are waving, and the people, in the energy of their loyalty, are spreading even their garments in the way. Look now at the face of the King in the hour of His triumph ; is there any exultation, any joy, any pride, in His success ? Tears are on the lashes of the Man of Sorrows, for His one thought is for Jerusalem which He loves, and the souls He has come to save. See Him, too, as He enters the temple, immediately stirred

by the thought of God's honour and glory, and there, by His stern reproving of sin, He endangers at once His own popularity. No truckling to popular opinion, no winking at public scandals for the sake of popularity. God's honour and glory first and foremost, and the good of His people next. No thought of His own position, and yet He accepts quietly the homage that is His due. No pride that apes humility. He knows the very stones should worship Him and says so. On that day we see Christ showing us the path of perfect humility in the midst of popularity, for His thoughts are for God and for others, and never for self. But as the days go on through the week of His Passion, we see Him plunging down into the depths of humiliation, because He would bear the punishment for our pride. See Him dragged as a common criminal before an unjust judge, see Him mocked and jeered at by the cruel soldiers, see Him smitten in the face and spat upon. And ever as we look we see the same calm, gentle, steadfast face, the eyes though full of sorrow, full of love for those who mock Him. Yes, and there is the same love for us, whose pride brought Him these indignities. How many thousands of sins of vanity were atoned for by Christ being stripped of His clothes on the Cross. And there He hangs, classed with the wicked murderers, the most despised and degraded Man in

God's creation, because in our pride we refuse humiliation.

XXXV

S. Luke xxiii. 34; Phil. ii. 5–9.

As we gaze at that Man stripped bare upon the hill of Calvary, we feel that He is bearing the penalty also of our covetousness. Do we say, 'Oh no, I am not covetous'? Let us be quite sure about it. Of course, we say we do not want a lot of money, and yet how many of us would like a little more than we have got. How many of us cling closely to our possessions, the things that money buys. Our comforts must not be interfered with, our dividends must be kept up, even though it means that in order to do it, those who are making our money are not being dealt with fairly. Then, too, as we get on in years there is a great temptation to pride of possession: our homes, our gardens, our books, our treasures, are emphatically ours and not the property of our Master, for Whom we hold them in trust.

Now let us turn our eyes to that Master, clothed in the purple raiment of His own precious blood. He, the King of Kings, the Maker of heaven and earth, thought the glories of heaven not a thing to be grasped at. He gave up that

for us. Then He had a sweet earthly home with His saintly mother; He gave up that to wander homeless over the hills of Judea. He had not where to lay His head. Then see Him being stripped even of the clothes He stood up in. Absolutely everything shall be given up by Him, because we are so loth to part with anything. The dear Lord would not even keep a cottage for Himself, and He suffered Himself to be stripped as we see Him. Why? Not because it is wrong to have a home and to be decently clothed, but because you and I have sinned in our love for, and misuse of, earthly comfort.

Oh, my God, help me to learn that the things of this world are just of no importance whatever as compared with the salvation of a single human soul. Help me to realise that all my money and possessions are just so many instruments put into my hands by the Master, to be used for the blessing of others and for the salvation of the precious souls of His children.

XXXVI

S. John xix. 1–6.

Yes, we must sorrowfully confess that a love of comfort and ease is the cause of much of the failure in our lives. How many prayers have been missed because of the attraction of

comfortable beds; how many kind actions have been left undone because we preferred to sit in an easy armchair by the fire? How many times have souls fallen into the sins of impurity (and dragged others perhaps with them) because bodies wished to be comfortable? The worst of it is, that a love of ease and comfort seems to grow upon us if we give way to it. Nothing worth doing can be done without discipline, and we do so hate discipline. Just look at the result.

Because we have refused to give up our rest for the sake of others, see Him through the long hours of Maundy Thursday night being dragged backwards and forwards from one judgment seat to another, bruised, smitten, spat upon, fainting nearly from hunger and weariness. Instead of His body being comfortable, see the cruel scourge falling on His back and the nails piercing His hands and feet. See Him falling beneath the weight of the cruel cross, because we have so often refused to bear burdens for the sake of others. Ah, we have often been so ready to shift our own burdens, let alone the taking up of the burdens of others.

What is the bed on which Jesus lies? The hard bed of the Cross; no soft pillow to His head, only a crown of thorns.

Oh dear Lord Jesus, forgive my love of ease, my sloth, my self-indulgence, and teach me to

help Thee bear Thy cross by bearing the burdens of others.

XXXVII

S. Mark xv. 33–39.

The time of Jesus' death draws nigh. He has been nailed with cruel blows to the cross, and now it is raised up on high, that Christ may draw all men unto Him. For thirty-three long years He has toiled for the sons of men, and, in return, they have hung Him there. Surely, now He can leave it all and go home to His Father in heaven. Surely, He has done enough for sinful man. Can He not leave them and ascend up, 'mid a crowd of angels, to the glory of heaven? One body of heretics taught that such did happen, but the Catholic Church has always held that to the uttermost depth of suffering Christ went for us. For six long hours He still persevered in His work of love. Six hours of intense suffering and awful desolation. At any moment He could have given up the ghost, for He said, 'No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself'; but no, hour after hour he hung, until, with a sigh of relief, He could cry, 'It is finished'—'Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit.' Can it be that those long hours were added to our dear Saviour's life, those

hours of bitter suffering borne, because we have so often failed to persevere to the end? How often have we been able to say 'It is finished' to work we have undertaken? Finished, that is, in the way Christ's work was finished—faithfully, perfectly—even though it cost Him aching limbs and a sweat of blood.

It has been said the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and I fear the path of many a saint who, through the mercy of God, at last may reach heaven is encumbered and strewn with the wrecks of unfinished works. How hard many of us find perseverance! We begin a good work, or some habit of devotion, with such earnestness, and then weariness comes; we hate the monotony, we dislike the burden of it, and we just let it slide, and so to the hours of our Saviour's life is added some minutes of darkness and suffering.

Perhaps it would help us if we tried to finish each moment of our lives more perfectly. Once a soul was helped by considering a beautiful lily of the valley. Each little bell so perfect, coming out in all its beauty to spread sweetness through the world, and up the stem appears another, later in time, but just as perfect. And so they go on unfolding and unfolding, until the lily is a thing of perfect beauty and its work is done. Can we make our lives like this? Each hour, each day, beautiful, finished, and

glorious with the sweetness of God's love. Living our lives, doing our work, as well as we can, moment by moment, until, through the Mercy of God and the merits of our dear Saviour, we can say, 'It is finished,' and the whole may be offered with His merits as a thing of sweetness and beauty, a joy to the heart of God.

XXXVIII

S. Luke xxii. 39–45.

How very different our lives are from that ideal of each being a thing of beauty and a joy to God's heart. And what is it that spoils them? Surely it is sin and only sin that is the cause of all the ugliness in the world. And yet how little we think of sin. If the world had hated sin, our dear Lord would not have had to suffer and to die.

The devil has always been trying to make people think lightly of sin, and surely in these days he has almost succeeded. Some people get rid of their sense of responsibility by exploiting, as it were, the doctrine of heredity. They say we are what our fathers and mothers have made us, no one can blame us, and while they, by implication, blame their ancestors they quite forget that they themselves are responsible for the welfare of future generations.

Next, there is the cry of the need of self-realisation. Every whim must be allowed, every passion must be indulged, in order that a man may know all, and be all, of which he is capable. The old-fashioned virtues of obedience to elders and piety to parents are decried, so that youth may do what it chooses and revel in every kind of experience. There is no doubt that for one person to absolutely control another so as to crush all individuality is to go against the will of God's creation, Who has made every leaf even different from its neighbour; but surely we were not created each one in isolation, and for man to rise to his highest development he must recognise the claims of those around him and sacrifice his will for others' good.

Personally, perhaps, we have not accepted these modern ways of thought, but I think we must allow that even Christians have been influenced unconsciously in the direction of thinking lightly of sin. We have to make such efforts after contrition—and the self-condemnatory words of a former generation seem to us so unnatural and exaggerated. God forbid that we should ever use words of our own state of mind which we feel exaggerated and unreal; but at least let us recognise that those holy men and women used that language, because their hatred of sin was deeper, and their penitence more real, than ours. S. Paul's self-condemna-

tion got deeper and deeper the longer he lived and the holier he became, and it is no sign of holiness to feel unconscious of sin. It is even, sometimes, like the absence of pain in those who have been mortally injured, the worst sign of all. Well, then, if we are conscious that our hatred of sin is not what it ought to be, how can we alter that state of mind? There is one way, and only one way, and that is to learn the mind of God, by seeing how the Holy Son of God felt about sin.

Let us to-day, in heart, go down the road from Jerusalem into the valley of the Chedron; let us cross the stream and enter the garden of Gethsemane. The moon is shining through the olive trees, the same Pascal moon that is shining to-night, 1900 years since the time of which we are thinking. The disciples are by us in a group near the entrance to the garden. We pass them, and walk further into the depth. Here we find the three well-loved disciples, those who are closest to our Lord in love and devotion; but they, too, sleep. How still it is, until we hear a sobbing cry from One who, away under the trees, is bowed upon the olive roots. 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' We do not need to ask what that cup was, we know—the sins of the world were pressing upon the heart of the Son of Man. He lay there sweating great drops of blood because

He had taken to Himself that burden; He felt as if He were the sinner and were overwhelmed with the horror and hatred of sin, just because you and I think so very little of our sins.

'Ever when tempted make me see beneath the
Olive's moon-pierced shade
My God alone outstretched and bruised and
bleeding on the earth He made.'

'And make me feel it was my sin,
As if no other sin there were
Which was to Him who bears the world
A load that He could scarcely bear.'

Let us pray earnestly to-day that we may indeed reflect the mind of God in our attitude to sin.

Shall we reverently ask why sin seems so terrible to the heart of God? Surely, it partly is because He knows the awful destructive power of sin and the beauty of that which sin destroys.

What an outcry arose when Germany and Austria, in their insensate hate, began to bomb Venice. Those who know that wonderful jewel of the Adriatic, with its beautiful palaces and irreplaceable churches mirrored in the waters of the canals and lagoons, were filled with horror at the blindness to beauty and the wanton hatred of those who professed to be the in-

tellectual leaders of the world. Yet what is the beauty of the Queen of the Adriatic, rising out of the sea, as one has often seen it in the pearly mists of the early morning, or shining in all the blaze of the reflected glory of the sunset sky, to the beauty of a soul reflecting the image of God? Do we not know the catch in our breath, the tear in our eye, that come when we hear of some wonderful act of self-sacrifice done in the power of love; and is it not the beauty of a human soul reflecting the mind of God that touched us with a deeper feeling than has ever been called forth by the sight of the most exquisite scenery or perfect work of art? Every soul born into the world God sees as capable of putting on that beauty and shining with that light; His eye also sees the ugliness, the ruin, the destruction, wrought in us by our sins. Oh, the pity of it to the heart of God! Remember, too, that souls are not just things of potential abstract beauty to Him, but are the objects of His devotion—the children of His love.

XXXIX

S. Luke xxiii. 26–46.

Yes, our God saw the ruin and destruction awaiting us unless we would be delivered from

the power of sin, and therefore Good Friday dawned. He saw the beautiful streams of life becoming stagnant and putrid, because souls were wrapped up in self and forgot to renew their graces from above and to pass on their blessings to those around.

Because we wouldn't give, He will be given to the uttermost; because we are wrapped up in thoughts of self, He will show us a life that has been lived for the good of others, laid down willingly, absolutely, for our salvation.

We cannot say much to-day, we can only place ourselves, in spirit, back in Jerusalem on that first Good Friday morning. All through those terrible hours we see the mind of God, as shown forth in the Saviour's absolutely unselfish suffering. In the midst of His betrayal the night before, He had time to think of Malchus' suffering and healed his ear; in the Palace of Caiaphas, when He was being falsely accused and His death was being determined on, His heart was with S. Peter in his temptation and failure, and He gave the look that won that soul to penitence. He could make excuses for Pilate and say that he was not so much to blame as others. And when He went forth, bearing His cross up the way of sorrows, His thoughts were so much with the loss and ruin of His people that He bade the women weep for that and not for Him.

Now we see Him hanging on the cross amidst the jeering, mocking crowds whom He loves so much. Through those long hours He seems to have been exercised, not for Himself, but for the salvation of souls. The impenitent, the penitent, His own dear ones, in turn, have His attention, and not till the hours of darkness are nearly over and death is drawing nigh does He give any sign that He was conscious of Himself. We cannot but feel the word ' I thirst ' was said in order that we might know that Jesus really suffered, and not, as some heretics have declared, only appeared to suffer. That word and the bitter cry, ' Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani,' have proved for all ages that into the depths of physical and mental suffering the God Man went, so that we might know in our trials that He can sympathise with us in all things. Oh the selfless life of the perfect Son of God ! Oh the absolute surrender of His death ! Can I think of my pleasures, my comfort, my rights, or even of my spiritual blessings, before the welfare and the salvation of my fellow men ?

XL

1 S. Peter iii. 18–21.

It is finished. Into the Father's hands Christ has yielded His Spirit, and yet He does

not forget the souls of those He loves. Down into the realm of the departed spirits, down into the regions where those are who have sinned without light, goes the soul of the Man Christ Jesus. Full of mystery is that time when He preached to the spirits in prison—mystery that surrounds the condition of our dear dead. Surely the visit of Christ to these souls gives us good hope that many of those who have not known Him and consciously served Him on earth may yet share the benefit of His Passion and the glory of His resurrection. If Christ preached to the souls of the people who sinned before the Flood, surely there is no soul for whom we may not pray, leaving the all-seeing eye of God to judge whether that soul has made the ' great refusal '—using that expression as meaning a wilful deliberate refusal of God's love and holiness, for only such are out of reach of the mercy of God. Did I say *may* pray, I should have said *must* pray ; for, surely, in so far as we fail to care for the souls who have gone before and fail to aid them with our prayers, we are failing to follow the example of Jesus, Who descended into Hades for their blessing.

Before we leave the thought of Holy Saturday, let us kneel, as it were, for a moment and gaze at the Body of our Blessed Saviour as it lies in death for us. How still He lies, just waiting till, at the Father's word, His Spirit shall return

and He go forth conquering and to conquer. There are the marks of His sufferings, hereafter to shine with glory; there are the beautiful hands lying still and helpless, that have so often healed the sick and blessed the children. Christ's last word on the cross was 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' and surely the sight of that quiet body, lying waiting for the word of the Father, is a beautiful symbol of His absolute self-surrender.

We have spoken much of our duty and power of helping the souls of those around us, so that we may fulfil perfectly the object of our creation, and show forth the fruits of our redemption. And it will be well for us to realise that, in order to share in this way the work of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we must copy faithfully His self-surrender.

Our spirits must be given up, as it were, into the hand of God; our bodies must lie, as it were, waiting for the inspiration of God. Every thought received, every word said, every action undertaken, must be in absolute surrender to the Will of God. Not my wisdom, but God's wisdom. Not my life, but God's life in me. Not my love, but the love of the Holy Spirit shown forth by me is what will really help other souls. Does this sound disheartening? It need not do so. God can take each little bit of self-surrender as we are able to offer it, and make it work a

work for Him and for others, and as we grow in grace the surrender will increase, the sacrifice of self become more perfect, until, rejoicing in the Communion of Saints, we at last shall realise that God is All in All and we are together in Him.

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